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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

TREATMENT OF THE NEGROES,

IN THE

ISLAND OF JAMAICA,

INCLUDING

SOME ACCOUNT OF THEIR TEMPER AND CHARACTER,

WITH

REMARKS

ON THE IMPORTATION OF SLAVES

FROM THE

COAST OF AFRICA.

IN A LETTER

TO A PHYSICIAN IN ENGLAND,

FROM HECTOR M'NEILL.

BRITANNICI BELLI EXITUS EXPECTATUR. CONSTAT ENIM ADITUS INSULÆ ESSE MUNITOS MIRIFICIS MOLIBUS: ETIAM ILLUD JAM COGNITUM EST, NEQUE ARGENTI SCRIPULUM ESSE ULLUM IN ILLA INSULA, NEQUE ULLAM SPEM PRÆDÆ NISI EX MANCIPIIS.

CICERO, EPIST: AD ATTICUM, LIB. IV.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor of the following Letter, in preſenting it to the Public, fulfils the Intention of its Author, and complies with his Requeſt.

He underſtands that the Manuſcript has been peruſed, and approved by ſeveral reſpectable Characters in JAMAICA.

Some Account was given of its Object and Tendency, in the JAMAICA Papers, in MAY laſt, and this Account was copied into the MORNING CHRONICLE, in the Month of JULY.

The Obſervations were, it ſeems, collected during a Tour round JAMAICA, of which the Author, in a Letter, dated the

25th

25th of MARCH, gives the following Account.

" To diſſipate a Gloom, which Inactivity
" and Liſtleſſneſs would have increaſed;
" to fill up an Interval of Three or Four
" Months; and to ſee and converſe with
" many of thoſe Gentlemen to whom I
" brought out Introductory Letters, it was
" propoſed to me to make a Tour of the
" Iſland, by the Windward Coaſt. Ac-
" cordingly, about Six Weeks ago, I ſet
" off, with no other Companions than a
" good Horſe, a Mulatto Boy and a Mule,
" to explore Scenes I had never beheld,
" and to viſit thoſe of whom I knew noth-
" ing but the Name. During this Excur-
" ſion, I have experienced a Variety of
" Adventures, new, unexpected, and uni-
" formly agreeable. I have met, as if by
" Inchantment, with Friends and Ac-
" quaintances I never dreamt to have ſeen;
" School-fellows and Fellow-ſtudents, with
" whom I have talked over the ſcenes of
Youth

" Youth and Infancy, and enjoyed *the Tales*
" *of other Times.* I have met with Stran-
" gers in this Land, of univerſal Hoſpitali-
" ty, who have vied with each other in
" rendering my Situation pleaſant, and in
" prolonging my Stay, &c.

" In the Courſe of this Tour, the Treat-
" ment of the Negroes has been the Object
" of my conſtant Attention. The favour-
" able Opportunities I have had, and ſtill
" have, for making Obſervations, have in-
" duced me to treat this Subject at ſome
" Length, in a Letter, which I meant to
" have ſent you, by this Conveyance; but
" the Matter, I found, would ſwell to ſuch
" a Size under my Hands, that I have dropt
" all Thoughts of a common Letter, and
" ſhall ſend you a Manuſcript, which, I
" hope, will prove not unworthy of Public
" Attention."

Accordingly

Accordingly this Manuſcript arrived about Two Months ago, accompanied by Directions to lay it without Delay before the World.

The Subject is certainly intereſting and important; and candid Men, whatever their private Opinions upon it may be, will rejoice to ſee Truth brought forward on every Side of the Queſtion. The Editor has committed it to the Preſs with all convenient Speed, having exerciſed no other Liberty with it, than that of making ſome verbal Corrections. A few other Alterations he ſhould indeed have been tempted to make, had there not been an Impropriety in his meddling with a Repreſentation of Facts, of which he has had no Opportunity of judging; or interfering with a Train of Reaſoning, on which it is unneceſſary for him to give an Opinion.

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A

LETTER.

IT is with pleaſure I now proceed to inform you of the preſent ſtate of Slavery in this country; a circumſtance, which, in the courſe of this journey, I have had great opportunities to inveſtigate perſonally. It may not be unneceſſary to preface what I am about to advance, by remarking, that neither prejudice nor intereſt, in the preſent inſtance, can poſſibly have the ſmalleſt effect in warping my opinion. You may remember, that impreſſed with a keen ſenſe of the ſeverities inflicted on the helpleſs Negro, during my former reſidence in the WINDWARD ISLANDS, twenty years ago, I afterwards, not only turned my thoughts ſeriouſly to a conſideration of the ſubject, but committed them to writing.

On my leaving BRITAIN, the laſt time, thoſe impreſſions were rather ſtrengthened by the peruſal of certain publications, which tended to rouze the indignation, and excite the pity of the public.

On my arrival in JAMAICA, however, I found at the firſt view the ſcenes appeared very different from thoſe I was formerly accuſtomed to; for, inſtead of ſeverity, cruelty, and injuſtice, I obſerved, in the towns of this iſland, ſuch a degree of lenity as often to occaſion licentiouſneſs; and, in the country, a general attention and humanity to the welfare of the Negro, ſufficient to make bondage eaſy.

That many Slaves are wretched, cannot be denied: But the happineſs and miſery of Negroes in this iſland, (and by what I am able to underſtand of thoſe in other iſlands alſo) depend now almoſt totally on themſelves. If a Negro is idle, lazy, or flagitious, he is, like the raſcals and drones of ſociety in every well regulated ſtate, poor and miſerable, and ſubject to ſevere treatment and correction, as a puniſhment for his own vices, and for the inſtruction of others: But, on the contrary, if he is induſtrious in his own concerns, and attentive to the intereſt of his ſuperior, mild in temper, and tractable in diſpoſition, he is entitled to indulgencies and advantages, which, I am pretty confident, thouſands at home would be happy to enjoy. Take a few of the leading comforts in the ſituation of the Negroes, and then judge for yourſelf.

1. The habitations of the Slaves on every eſtate, are ſituated at no great diſtance from the dwelling-houſe of the owner or overſeer of the plantation, that they may be under more immediate inſpection. Theſe are in general comfortable and commodious, with an allotment of ground ſufficient for a garden to each houſe. Here they plant

plant their fruits and rear their ſtock, which, every Sunday, or as opportunity may offer, they carry to market, and, in return, purchaſe thoſe little neceſſaries, and even luxuries, which they wiſh to enjoy.

2. Beſides this, there is a portion of land belonging to every eſtate, denominated *Negro-Grounds*, of which each Slave is allowed as much as he can cultivate, for his own uſe. This land, from the amazing fertility of the ſoil, requires only a portion of occaſional labour, which does not engroſs more than four hours in the week, and this is often ſufficient to produce abundance of proviſions for a Negro from one year to the other.

3. Every Negro is allowed, independent of Sunday, which he has to himſelf throughout the year, one day in each fortnight, for eight months, for the particular purpoſe of cultivating or working his grounds, which time is amply ſufficient. Had any of your theoretical philoſophers, who diſtreſs the public and deceive themſelves with airborne calamities, attended me in the different excurſions I made to explore theſe habitations, he would ſoon have ceaſed to conſider the *African* bondage as a ſtate of extreme wretchedneſs, or even as a ſtate of poverty. He would have ſeen, in the habitations of the Slaves, a range or ſtreet of buildings, anſwering every purpoſe of convenience and comfort, each encircled with groves of plantain, bananna, and orange trees, loaded with fruit: He would have, perhaps, with aſtoniſhment, perceived, inſtead of penury and want, numbers of ſtyes filled with hogs, and flocks of fowls, ducks and turkies, all for ſale, or deſtined

tined for thoſe ſocial and joyous feaſts which conſtitute the principal delight of the Negro *. Had his curioſity prompted him to inveſtigate matters more minutely, he would have found in many of theſe habitations, an arrangement of apartments; a propriety of furniture; a ſupply of utenſils and a decency, and even parade of apparel, little to be expected in the poſſeſſion of Slaves.

All this, 'tis true, although often, is not generally met with; but it proves what an induſtrious well diſpoſed Negro may do, if he chuſes, at the ſame time that it elucidates the lenity and encouragement they experience, and how little real cauſe there is for ſuppoſing WEST INDIA maſters and governors hardened, cruel, and inattentive. In fact, it is not yeſterday that the planter has perceived his error in harſh uſage, and his advantage in paying every attention to the welfare of his Slave.

Formerly, it is ſaid, the inhuman maſter conſidered theſe

* Add to theſe advantages, that on thoſe eſtates which have pens for breeding cattle, it is no uncommon circumſtance for the Negroes to be in poſſeſſion of 15, 20, 30, and ſometimes 40 head, from the indulgence of the proprietors in allowing the cattle of induſtrious Slaves to feed and multiply among their own. As I am on this ſubject, I ſhall relate a ſingular circumſtance which happened in this neighbourhood, and which afforded me great delight when I heard it. On a proprietor of a large ſugar work having fallen behind hand, the Negroes on his eſtate collected among themſelves 300l. which they laid at his feet, and in their rude eloquence implored him to accept. It is with peculiar pleaſure I record this fact; which, (although it accords not with the *general* diſpoſition of the Negro) proves not only the wealth which theſe people poſſeſs, but their attachment to a good maſter.

theſe devoted wretches in no other point of view than as ſo many cattle that would, for a certain number of years, continue to perform their dreadful taſks, and then expire. This term, I have been told, was ſeldom expected to exceed 7 or 8 years, in which time, from labouring hard, not only during the day, but part of the night, exhauſted nature ſunk under the load of accumulated oppreſſion: But times and circumſtances have altered wonderfully.---The value, or more properly ſpeaking, the original price of the Negro, has, in the courſe of thirty years, riſen upwards of one third †; the proprietor is therefore led to view Negro Property as an object of great concern, and conſequently is diſpoſed to preſerve it by every prudent method. Hence, the great change in the treatment of Negroes, and hence, thank God! the ſource of thoſe comforts and indulgences which meliorate and ſweeten the cup of Slavery. Unleſs it is during crop time (*i. e.* the making of ſugar and rum, when, from the conſtant attention neceſſary for the production of theſe articles, every perſon takes his *ſpell* or watch in the boiling-houſe or mill one night in three) ‡ no Negro is compelled to labour after

† About 30 years ago the price of a new Negro was commonly from 35l. to 40l. at preſent the current price is from 65l. to 70l.

‡ This period generally continues four months, and from the circumſtance of *nightly* labour may, perhaps, be conſidered as the moſt dreadful part of Negro Slavery. It is however, on the contrary, the happieſt period in the year; a fact, evident not only from the general appearance of the Negroes, but from the chearfulneſs and good health that accompany all their actions. During *Crop*, every Negro is allowed to eat as much of the *cane*, and drink as much of the *hot liquor* from

after it is dark. A comfortable evening's repaſt, and night's reſt, enable him to return with vigour to the next morning's work, which, however ſtrange it may appear, is by no means ſo hard as that of many of the labouring poor in *Great Britain* §.

The

from the coppers, as he chuſes. Of theſe two articles they are particularly fond, and it is really incredible how much of both they conſume. Theſe ſaccharine juices it would appear are productive of excellent effects, particularly on thoſe who from ſloth or diſeaſe have been meagre and weakly; for from the commencement till the concluſion of the crop, Negroes may be ſaid to encreaſe daily in health, ſtrength, plumpneſs and ſpirits. During the whole night, labour is accompanied by ſong. The young girls in particular, ſing in parts, and as a good ear and an African are inſeperable; to the lover of muſic and humanity, their muſic is a double feaſt. Often have I enjoyed it at the expence of reſt; and often has it ſmoothed my pillow, and lulled me into ſlumbers. Let this picture which I do aſſure you is drawn from invariable practice in this iſland, be an anſwer to thoſe idle accounts which have lately been palmed on the public.

§ Of late years conſiderable changes have been introduced in this iſland to eaſe bodily labour. The *digging of cane holes*, is, undoubtedly, the moſt ſevere work the negro has to execute; but ſince the introduction of the *plow*, which prepares the ground for the *hoe*, the fatigue comparatively ſpeaking is nothing. I have been informed, that the negroes now are rather fond than otherwiſe of this ſpecies of labour; for on every well regulated eſtate they are during the digging of cane holes, daily and plentifully ſupplied with good punch. In a ſhort time I ſhould ſuppoſe the whole of this work will be generally performed by cattle, a plow having been lately invented for that purpoſe, which it is ſaid anſwers extremely well. As to the article of *picking graſs*, on which ſo much has been ſaid by late writers, no ſuch thing now exiſts in this iſland. I believe, however, that neither this alleviation, nor that of the plow has yet been generally introduced in the other iſlands.—In Grenada, I am confidently informed, that the old practices ſtill prevail.

The immenſe loſſes ſuſtained by the late hurricanes, which ſwept away almoſt every thing but *Negro property*, has occaſioned a double attention to its preſervation, as the only means of retrieving by labour, what calamities had utterly deſtroyed.

Independent of a variety of inſtances, which might be here adduced in ſupport of the aſſertion, that every humane attention is *now* paid by the Planter to his Slave, the *Conſolidated Slave Act*, juſt paſſed by the Aſſembly of this iſland, is not unworthy attention. Formerly, if a White Man, whether proprietor or otherwiſe, killed a Negro, or was the cauſe of his death by any act of ſeverity, he was, for the firſt offence, entitled to benefit of Clergy, and not liable to capital puniſhment till a repetition of the crime. By the preſent law, it is enacted, " That if any perſon, whether owner or ſuperintendant of Slaves, ſhall be convicted of having, by any act of paſſion or cruelty, occaſioned the death of any Negro, it ſhall be capital for the *firſt* offence; and for the greater ſecurity of the property, and as a check on thoſe who may have the puniſhment of Slaves in their power, it is particularly required, that every ſurgeon or doctor belonging to each eſtate, ſhall ſwear to the cauſe of the death of each Negro, to the beſt of his knowledge and belief; and, if any Negro dies, and is interred by the owner or overſeer, without the doctor's having ſeen or been ſent for to ſuch Negro, in this caſe, the owner or overſeer cauſing the Negro to be ſo interred, is liable to a proſecution for ſuch conduct. This is intended, no doubt, to reſtrain the wanton abuſe of power; the violence of ungarded paſſion, and the no leſs fatal, though apparently leſs cruel, effects of indolence or wilful inattention to the welfare of the Slave.

4. But

4. But what renders, in my opinion, the ſituation of the Negro peculiarly comfortable, and ſuperior to that of the labouring poor at home, is the proviſion made for him during ſickneſs and old age. In *Britain*, a labourer *may* contrive, by dint of inceſſant toil, to earn a ſubſiſtance for himſelf, a wife and a ſmall family, while he continues to poſſeſs health. Take that from him, or prolong his exiſtence till old age and infirmities creep upon him---what is the conſequence? Even a temporary illneſs of a few weeks is often ſufficient to beggar himſelf and family; at all events, and to ſpeak within bounds, it cannot fail to occaſion much real miſery and diſtreſs. What happens to the *Negro* in ſimilar ſituations? Why, on the firſt ſymptoms of indiſpoſition or diſeaſe, he is inſtantly exempted from all labour; he is put into a houſe particularly appropriated to the purpoſe, (a lazaretto or *hot-houſe*, as it is generally called) he is attended by a practitioner of medicine in the diſtrict where he reſides; he is daily ſupplied with freſh viands, vegetables, and even wine; he is attended by a nurſe, who, likewiſe, acts generally as an under medical aſſiſtant; and he is not deſired or allowed to reſume labour till health and ſtrength enable him to undergo its fatigues. Let indiſpoſition continue ever ſo long, no immediate loſs, no derangement or confuſion in his little property is the conſequence. Poverty, want, and affliction, are by no means the concomitants here of a ſick bed; every thing, through the aſſiſtance of his fellow-labourers, and the direction of his ſuperiors, goes on, and is attended to in the ſame way as if he were immediately on the ſpot: His grounds are worked; his ſtock raiſed; his fruits and product carried to market, by his family or connections, and as he is amply ſupplied with every neceſſary

ceſſary during his confinement; inſtead of being poorer, he comes out of his hoſpital often a richer man than when he went in *.

When old age has rendered his farther exertions uſeleſs, the hoary headed bondſman becomes often the partaker of LIBERTY, which ſheds its kindly beams upon his parting day. Previous to this period, it may be preſumed, that property has been acquired, and a ſituation of comfort eſtabliſhed. Theſe he is allowed to enjoy unmoleſted, while the uſual proportion of proviſions and cloathing are annually given to him; his children, and his children's children; his friends and former fellow-labourers; his countrymen and fellow-paſſengers, for whom an unalterable affection continues till death, are all near him, and all ready to adminiſter their helps and conſolation †.

In ſhort, (to re-touch no longer a picture, which perhaps, ſome will account exaggerated and even falſe) inſtead of wretchedneſs and chilling penury, old age, in this ſtate, and in this country, often wears away, and ſnaps its ſlender thread, as gently, and perhaps as imperceptibly, as in any country I know.

* I have been credibly informed by ſeveral gentlemen acquainted with the fact, that many Negroes have actually accumulated upwards of 300l. of this currency.

† The poſſeſſions belonging to old Negroes are commonly bequeathed by the deceaſed to his relations, or they are beſtowed by the ſuperintendant on the moſt deſerving and the moſt needy; but more particularly on thoſe who poſſeſſed the greateſt ſhare of affection of the deceaſed:—an excellent inſtitution to inſure attention and comfort to the aged.

Having ſaid ſo much on the ſide of Negro indulgence in this part of the globe, I ſhall now ſay a few words relative to the hardſhips they endure; hardſhips, which are in general inſeparable from a ſtate of ſlavery; and I ſhall offer a few remarks on the plans of reform now going on.

I believe there are few men endowed with the ſentiments of Liberty, who will venture to ſupport, in ſpeculation, a ſyſtem of Slavery, however productive it may be. For my own part, I entirely diſapprove the traffic in the human ſpecies, which has ſo long been ſanctioned by cuſtom; and I heartily wiſh that ſome expedient could be deviſed, to preclude the neceſſity of a trade, which human pity recoils at, and which ſo materially affects the character of a Briton. But how the Slave Trade is to be relinquiſhed without throwing up entirely all *Weſt India* property, I muſt confeſs I am completely ignorant.

You talk of "An Aſſociation having been formed for the purpoſe of endeavouring to meliorate the condition of the Negroes;" and conclude with obſerving, "that ſomething will probably be done for the regulation of the Slave Trade, and, perhaps, its extinction in a certain number of years." I have already endeavoured to convince you, by incontrovertible proofs, that the Negroes in this country are generally protected. If, by meliorating their condition, you mean any thing more than rendering their ſituation *more comfortable, though ſtill in a ſtate of Slavery*, I muſt be excuſed, if I cannot find it out; but if this is your meaning, as I conceive it to be, I think I may venture to aſſert, that no ſet of politicians or projectors at home

home are equally qualified to execute this taſk, with men immediately on the ſpot, long acquainted with the nature and treatment of Negroes, and anxiouſly bent (for their own intereſt, if you pleaſe) on promoting the welfare and encreaſing the number of Slaves on their properties. As for any plans for emancipating Negroes, and converting them into hired ſervants, you may depend upon it, that nothing on earth can be more completely chimerical, nor any ſyſtem more productive of general miſchief, and that for the following reaſons:

In the firſt place, Negroes will never work, if left to the freedom of their own inclinations. The nature of this creature, like that of all animals in a ſavage ſtate, is averſe to induſtry, particularly to that uniform and ſteady action which diurnal labour requires. Nothing but the immediate and preſſing calls of hunger, or the love of pleaſure prompts the Negro to voluntary action; as a proof of which, nothing is more common than Negroes leaving an employ where good treatment and plenty are ever to be met with, and where exceſſive labour is never required, for the dreary and deſperate ſituation of a run-away, which ſubjects them to reſide amidſt unfrequented woods and moraſſes, expoſed to every inclemency of the ſeaſon; the precarioufneſs of ſubſiſtance, and the conſtant dread of detection in his nightly depredations, without which they could not ſubſiſt. "Aye! but" ſays an Engliſhman, full of his favourite, and perhaps proſtituted theme, "this is the effect of bleſſed liberty!"

Now I, (who I hope have as much liberty in my nature as any Engliſhman in his right ſenſes, ſay no! A Negro

has no more idea of liberty good ſir, than your horſe. Both are equally diſpoſed to roam at large without controul; and provided they have plenty to eat and drink, they will not come near you. Take however either, and break him in properly; accuſtom him to the bridle and occaſionally to the whip; direct him to the road in which he is to go, and convince him, by invariable practice, of the good treatment and advantage he will experience at the end of his journey, he will ſoon (unleſs he is vicious) not only bear, but love the taſk he has to perform, and, inſtead of a deſire to enjoy perpetual freedom, will receive more real pleaſure from one day's liberty in the week, than from ſeven. "Yes, Sir!" exclaims my indignant opponent, "this is the true language of a Weſt India Negro-driver! Your admirable and humane ſimile breathes the right ſpirit of Slavery and debaſement, when rational creatures and the beaſts of the field are indiſcriminately blended together. Your *whips* and your *bridles* are applications too well exemplified in the treatment of the hapleſs Negro; and I make little doubt, indeed, that the one animal in England is (to continue your compariſon) *broke in*, and accuſtomed to much gentler and kinder treatment, both *before* and *after his journey*, than the other in the Weſt Indies." Such, or ſomething ſimilar to it, would be the language of the greater part of thoſe amiable people, whoſe hearts ſwell with humanity and reſentment at the tale of oppreſſion; and, God forbid! that the ſons of BRITAIN ſhould ever hold other language, when nature calls upon them to be merciful and juſt! In the preſent inſtance, however, ignorance of the ſubject can eaſily "*lead aſtray the heart ſincere*, and, I think, not many words are neceſſary

ceſſary to prove it. The ſentiment of Liberty, though inherent in the human mind, in almoſt all countries and in all ages, may certainly, by a combination of circumſtances, be eradicated from it. That it is totally ſo, among the Slaves in this country, admits not of a doubt. ---A Negro has no other idea of the bleſſing of liberty than that of indulging his favourite paſſions, which, may be poſitively ſaid to center all in ceaſing occaſionally from labour to indulge appetite, groſs in their nature, and immoderate in their gratification. To poſſeſs twice every year, namely, at Chriſtmas and Eaſter, a few days to feaſt, ſing, dance and rejoice; to have time to carry his proviſions to market and purchaſe what neceſſaries he may have occaſion for; to be protected in his property, and to receive redreſs for the frauds, and ſecurity from the oppreſſion of his fellow Slaves. Now all this is granted him, and beyond this his ideas of liberty and independence extend not.

As an irrefragable proof of the truth of what I advance; there are no ſet of beings ſo miſerable in this country, or ſo great a peſt to ſociety from their worthleſſneſs, as many of thoſe very Negroes who have been emancipated; nor is it an uncommon circumſtance for well diſpoſed Slaves, to refuſe the offer of liberty, or to return after emancipation, begging to be reinſtated in their former bondage.--- This may appear wonderful, but it is by no means inexplicable.

A Negro in Slavery, as I before mentioned, is ſupplied with *every* thing he has occaſion for. He is protected in his property, aſſiſted and encouraged in his encreaſing

proſperity

proſperity, and particularly attended to during indiſpoſition. Now, all theſe advantages, and every other, except ten pounds currency annually‡, are ſnatched from him immediately on emancipation. He then ſtands alone to ſucceed or fall according to his *induſtry* or his *indolence*, the laſt of which is almoſt ſure to preponderate.

Void of that ſpirit or mind which turns with alacrity and pleaſure to action, the Negro left to himſelf, indulges his notorious propenſity to ſloth, even when he finds himſelf going down hill, nor does he ſtop till he arrives at the bottom, when it is neceſſary to do ſomething or ſtarve. Should he be worthleſs, rather than return to former habits of induſtry, he becomes the common thief and robber of the community. Should his diſpoſition be otherwiſe, he looks back to ſcenes of former comfort in the days of his bondage with regret: he returns to his old maſter, reſumes former occupations, and impelled by the conſtant injunctions of his ſuperior, and the dread of puniſhment, acquires habits of induſtry, cultivates his grounds, gets property, and re-gains happineſs. Had the Negro the love of rational freedom exiſting in his breaſt, it is next to impoſſible he could act thus.---But, alas! he knows nothing of this ineſtimable bleſſing, nor ever enjoyed it! The country which gave him birth, the ſoil from which he

‡ By the law of this iſland, every perſon who manumits a Negro Slave is required to pay him annually 10l. currency to prevent his becoming a burthen or nuiſance to the community. This is far from being regularly complied with; but admitting it were, it is by no means adequate to the maintenance (not to ſay comforts) of a free perſon, without conſiderable exertions of induſtry.

ſprung, produces no ſuch bloſſom!---All there is ſteril, blaſted and waſte; and inſtead of the foſtering hand to nurture and bring it to maturity, the bloody and unrelenting arm of Tyranny is eternally held up to cut it down!

To obtain information which may be relied on as true, relative to the ſtate of the different tribes in Africa, we muſt have opportunities much more favourable than any which have hitherto occurred. To rely entirely on the vague, and, perhaps, prejudiced accounts given us by thoſe immediately concerned in this odious traffic, would be folly: they know, in general, nothing further than the mere commercial intercourſe that takes place on thoſe parts of the Coaſt they reſide, or to which they repair.---Every thing elſe is completely unknown to them; the interior parts of this immenſe continent, the nature of government, and the ſtate of civil ſociety and manners among its inhabitants, have never yet been explored or inveſtigated.

To obtain any ſatisfactory intelligence from the natives themſelves who are brought to this country, is next to impoſſible; for a Negro without much violence of metaphor, may be compared to a bad pump, the working of which exhauſts your ſtrength before you can produce a drop of water. We however may glean where we cannot reap, and I really think, that from *every concurring circumſtance of intelligence and obſervation*, we are warranted to conclude, that the general ſtate of the Negro in Africa, is that of Slavery and oppreſſion in every ſenſe of the words. Take one ſtrong inſtance among many, which leads to this

this ſuppoſition, and which in my opinion goes farther than any poſitive aſſertion, for it is the voice of nature, to which, if we mean to eſtabliſh facts, we muſt always attend.

When a Negro of inferior ſtation obtains from his maſter redreſs for the ill treatment or injuſtice of another of *ſuperior* rank, he immediately exults, and addreſſes his oppreſſor in the following terms:---"*Ah! this no Negro Country---this, Boccra* (White) *Country---this, Juſtice Country!*"---A clear indication that in their own country impartial juſtice is at leaſt not generally adminiſtered, and that the poor ſeldom, if ever, receive redreſs from the powerful or the rich.

We need only refer the reader to thoſe identical accounts which the advocates for Weſt-India freedom have carefully collected of African War and bloodſhed, to prove the ſavage and inhuman tyranny of Negro Princes. I know I ſhall inſtantly be anſwered, that this war and bloodſhed the immediate conſequences of the diabolical Slave Trade. This however remains to be proved; for before any ſuch aſſertion be admitted as eſtabliſhed, we muſt be informed of the ſtate of Africa previous to this traffic, and of the real change introduced into the manners of the inhabitants from this trade.

That wars of the moſt bloody nature exiſted in Africa, previous to the commencement of the Slave Trade, no philoſophical mind would heſitate to affirm, from the univerſal practice of ſmall communities in the Savage State. We are told that priſoners taken in war were formerly devoured.

devoured; a fact which ſeems to be ſupported by the evidence of ſome of the Negroes in JAMAICA, who admit their countrymen to be Cannibals, when the fleſh of their enemies is to be the repaſt. If thoſe who were formerly ſaid to be murdered, and perhaps devoured, be now ſold into ſlavery, Who will ſay that the Slave-trade has increaſed the barbarity of the Africans?

A late writer attempts to prove, by a variety of quotations from different authors, that the wars carried on throughout the immenſe continent of AFRICA, are for no other purpoſe than to procure priſoners for ſale; among which quotations is the following: A ſkirmiſh (as it is called by a gentleman, who, it ſeems, was ſhipwrecked on the coaſt, and reſided a conſiderable time among the natives of Africa) took place on the banks of the NIGER. One party is "completely vanquiſhed, and in the power of the victors, *who give no quarter*, but *put all to the ſword without mercy:* They purſue them into the water, and continue to drag out and murder all theſe *whom, from wounds, they can eaſily overtake:* Neither male nor female are ſpared; nay, the very children, whom, we are told, *they took in great numbers*, did not eſcape the maſſacre." Now, admitting the greateſt degree of ferocity and cruelty to prevail, can we really ſuppoſe any ſet of human beings ſo ſtupid and blind to their own intereſt, as to murder and deſtroy the very game they had in view to ſeize, and ſell to advantage, and when this object too was the ſole cauſe of the war? This is a moſt ſingular fact. It

however proves what I have not the ſmalleſt doubt of, and what, indeed, is evident every day and every moment, to thoſe who reſide conſtantly among Negroes, and mark their conduct. It proves, that this ſtrange, irraſcible, turbulent creature, like all other ſavages, cannot be at peace with his own ſpecies; and that the fury of paſſion will often extinguiſh the ſenſe of intereſt. Who, after this, can doubt, that were EUROPEAN feet never to imprint the ſands of AFRICA, war, bloodſhed and tyranny would continue to be the lot of its wretched inhabitants.

I would not be ſevere, or uncharitable towards the unhappy Negroes, but certainly there are facts in their hiſtory, which are of a dark and degrading nature.

For argument ſake, we ſhall, however, admit that all the wars carried on in AFRICA *are* the immediate and ſole conſequence of our diſgraceful commerce. But, even allowing this, what ſhall we ſay of the people who can be brought to aſſent to ſuch traffic? Does it not argue a ſtrange depravity of morals, ſentiment, and juſtice, when one neighbour will, without compunction, lie in wait to kidnap and ſell the children of another? When a ſon, for a temporary gratification of taſte, will ſell his own father; and when thoſe mighty diſpenſers of equity, thoſe ſovereigns of juſtice, or, more properly ſpeaking, thoſe graziers of the human race, can, at all times, and at pleaſure, diſpoſe of whole flocks of their fellow-creatures for the luxury of drinking brandy, and and admiring their princely

princely countenances in a mirror. Does this prove the *humanity*, *ſociability*, *good-nature* and *civility* of the natives; the *high cultivation*, *plenty*, and *golden age* of the country---the *induſtry* and *good behaviour* of the inhabitants, or the *juſtice*, *attention*, and *exemplary conduct* of their rulers?---Yet, BRUE, and ADANSON and BOSMAN, and SMITH and BARBOT and ARTUS, and MARCHAIS, and LEMAIRE and VASCONSELAS, attribute theſe qualities to the country and people of AFRICA, and we certainly are bound to believe them!

We ſhall now treat of *Puniſhment*; a circumſtance, annexed to WEST INDIA Slavery, which operates with no ſmall force upon the minds of the people at home.

Were I to advance that puniſhments in this country are trifling and unfrequent, I ſhould not only draw on myſelf the imputation of groſs miſrepreſentation and prejudice, but in fact aſſert what is not founded in truth.---Puniſhments are certainly very frequent; and, to a mind actuated by compaſſion alone, theſe puniſhments are a ſource of conſtant pain. To me, I freely confeſs, they were very diſtreſſing on my firſt coming to this iſland, and even at this time, after having reaſoned on the neceſſity and (let me add) the *propriety* of certain puniſhments, the crack of the whip ſeldom fails to operate on my nerves like an electrical ſhock.---But let us not be carried away by mere ſenſibility; let us for a moment ſet Slavery aſide, and turn our eyes to thoſe communities

who call themſelves free, and who at the ſame time find, from repeated experience, that to produce ſubordination, to check vice, and to promote virtue, certain laws and inſtitutions are indiſpenſible.

An Engliſhman, of proper feelings, ſtarts with horror and indignation, at hearing that a poor wretched Black is purchaſed like a cow or a horſe; ſubjected to perpetual and rigid Slavery; ſnatched from all the ſweets and endearments of freedom, eaſe, country, friends and kindred at home; and, at the will of ſome tyrant of inhumanity and caprice, cut and ſlaſhed for every trifling fault he may commit! and even for thoſe temporary ſtruggles of nature to re-gain that invaluable bleſſing which oppreſſion had ſnatched from him.

Nothing is more eaſy than to draw a lamentable picture of this kind, to awaken the feelings of a human mind; but let thoſe who make ſo loud a clamour againſt practices, which I mean not to defend, look to practices equally ſevere, and doubly ſcandalous to the character of Britons. Let me aſk them, What is the condition of their own countryman, a high ſpirited, free-born Engliſhman, on board a man of war? Is he not, with all his boaſted liberties, dragged forcibly from all that may be comfortable and dear to him on ſhore, to an occupation which he deteſts, and to a bondage which, for the time, infinitely more dreadful than that of the Negro Slave? Is he not ſubjected to much harder labour; expoſed to every inclemency of weather and viciſſitude of climate; deprived

deprived of his night's reſt; and liable, from the very nature of his ſituation, to inevitable diſeaſe, which no medicine or attention can prevent from proving fatal? Is he not uſually accoſted, even in the obedient execution of his duty, by the moſt abuſive and domineering language? Is he not condemned and puniſhed by laws the moſt tyrannical?---A reply, a look, nay a motion, is often conſtrued into a crime; for which, without trial, and often without a hearing, he is immediately ſentenced to puniſhments greatly exceeding in ſeverity that of any Negro; and all this at the arbitrary will and pleaſure of *one man*, who, whatever he may do, is, by the admirable laws by which he inflicts puniſhments on others, effectually ſcreened from all riſk of future puniſhment himſelf? If theſe are not oppreſſions (and I'll prove them to be true) equal, and exceeding greatly any thing practiſed in this part of the world, I have nothing more to ſay.

But, to drop naval tyranny and naval ſlavery, let us turn our attention to the modes of puniſhments in every well-governed State; and that we may not be ſuſpected of unfairneſs in argument, let us reject what might be collected from other countries, and take a comparative view between the puniſhments in the freeſt and beſt government (ENGLAND) and thoſe conceived to be the moſt inhuman and illegal in the Land of Slavery and Injuſtice.

That we may accompliſh this in the feweſt words poſſible, I ſhall, without enumerating the various crimes and miſdemeanors which draw down puniſhment on the delinquent

linquent, content myſelf with ſimply aſking, If in the Land of Liberty there are not (independent of civil laws) fines---impriſonment---whipping---hard labour and correction---temporary Slavery in chains---perpetual baniſhment---confiſcation, and *death*?---Now, unleſs it be for Murder, the Negro experiences no other puniſhment in this country than that of a temporary confinement in the Stocks, or receiving ſo many laſhes on his poſteriors, which occaſions no injury to his health, and which, independent of immediate ſmart, he regards no more than a boy of ſix years old does the moderate correction of a Pedagogue on the ſame parts. ‖ No ſhame, remorſe, or dejection

‖ For crimes of a certain nature, ſuch as repeated theft and running away, Negroes are likewiſe ſometimes ſubjected to wear chains. This is intended not only as a ſtamp of infamy *in terrorem* to others; but as a mark by which they may at all times be diſtinguiſhed as bad Negroes, and more readily detected when they run away. Chains, however, are now almoſt exploded.

I am aware of your objection to this compariſon, which, from the diſparity of condition in the Freeman and the Slave, you will perhaps refuſe to admit as juſt. I muſt, however, beg leave to obſerve, that although *ſailors* may be ſaid *generally* to become ſo through choice; and although *puniſhments* in all civil ſocieties are inſtitutions in which, as members of ſociety, and enjoying its privileges, we acquieſce; ſtill, it matters very little to the *fugitives* who receive the puniſhments, by what means, or by what laws, they are applied. The circumſtance to be conſidered here, is not, Whether puniſhments in different countries are voluntary or involuntary ſacrifices of the ſubject's liberty; for that is nothing more than a compariſon between Liberty and Slavery, which will not bear an argument: but, whether the puniſhments in the one country are more numerous, or more ſevere, than thoſe in the other.

dejection, in conſequence of this chaſtiſement, preys on the mind of this Slave, who, in ſpite of every ſentiment of compaſſion which may lead us to commiſerate his lot, muſt be allowed to poſſeſs a temper and diſpoſition far from either amiable or attractive.

The character of the Negro, I believe, has never yet been completely drawn. A few traits, ſnatched from individuals, can never develope national character; nor can the moſt acute obſervations, drawn from a knowledge of *one* tribe, enable the Philoſopher to judge of the whole.---To attempt a *general* character of the Negro, from what we daily perceive in this country, would perhaps be raſh; for the AFRICANS, who ſupply the WEST INDIES, are compoſed of various tribes, which, in manners, cuſtoms, and natural diſpoſitions, differ ſo materially from each other, that no general or poſitive concluſion can be drawn reſpecting them.---I ſhall therefore preſent you with characters of the three principal tribes which people the WEST INDIA iſlands,---drawn at my requeſt by a friend of mine, whoſe experience and deep penetration, during a daily intercourſe of twenty-one years, may, I think, claim our attention.

"The *Coromantees* are by much the moſt ſavage of all the AFRICAN tribes imported into this country. They are born and bred in a ſtate of perpetual warfare; their chiefs are warriors, and plume themſelves like thoſe of other nations, on the number and rapidity of their conqueſts.---But unfortunately for the poor *Coromantees* (as it was for the

the Clans of old) their battles are fought among themſelves, when, after the moſt bloody and unmerciful carnage, victory declares itſelf for either party. The conqueror either conſigns the ſurviving priſoners to inſtant death, or ſells them into perpetual bondage; and this is done without reſpect to either perſon, age, or ſex. Hence, the number of Princes and women of rank of their country which you ſee brought here and ſold as Slaves. The Houſe of Bondage to them, ſtrictly ſpeaking, may be called a Land of Freedom, where, notwithſtanding they cannot enjoy pre-eminence, they can be comfortable, and where, although prevented from exerciſing cruelty on others, they are always protected themſelves.

" The *Coromantee*, in this country, requires a great deal of judicious taming before he becomes moderately uſeful, and much attention before he ceaſes to be dangerous. His diſpoſition is naturally haughty, cruel, and unforgiving; and when he conceives himſelf injured, he deſpiſes all riſk, and boldly faces every danger to deſtroy the object of his reſentment. Yet, when the *Coromantee* has lived ſome time in the country, when he ſees the nature of his employment, and mixes intimately with his fellow-ſlaves, he aſſimilates gradually, imperceptibly loſes a great portion of his native ferocity, and at laſt becomes a very valuable Slave.

" The *Eboes* are of a very different character; in their own country they likewiſe make war on each other, but not with the ſame motives as the *Coromantees*. The *Eboe* chieftian meaſures his glory by the numbers of his captives

tives, and theſe he immediately ſells, with the utmoſt apathy, to the beſt bidder.

" In their own country, the *Eboes* are perfidious, deceitful, and notorious thieves: They ſeem to have little or no natural affection, for in the time of the moſt profound peace, the father will ſell his ſon, and the ſon his father, according as either acquires the ſuperiority; and the mother will pluck the infant from her breaſt, and diſpoſe of it for a trifle to the rapacious trader.

" In this country, the *Eboe*, when bought young, is eſteemed the moſt valuable of all the Guinea Negroes, yet, he muſt be treated with great tenderneſs and circumſpection at firſt; for, when he is offended, he becomes ſulky and melancholy, takes a rope in his hand, walks deliberately to the firſt tree, and with great coolneſs tucks himſelf up. When he is ſeaſoned to this iſland, he becomes a laborious hardy Slave; cultivates his ground highly, and, from the natural covetouſneſs of his diſpoſition, often ſaves a deal of money, or acquires (if I may uſe the expreſſion) a conſiderable degree of independence.

" The *Mundingos* (under which deſcription may likewiſe be included moſt of the other tribes) are a people whoſe character ſeems to be leſs marked. In their own country they are rather harmleſs than warlike; their conduct does not aſſume the ſavage barbarity of the *Coromantee*, neither does it partake of that baſeneſs and perfidiouſneſs which ſtamp the *Eboe*. I am informed that

 they

they have ſome very equitable laws among themſelves; that they ſeldom make war with each other; and that it is when they are unfortunately engaged in war with ſome foreign tribe, that the poor *Mundingo* is fettered, and ſent into Slavery. In this country they are accounted faithful, good Negroes, but in general not ſo hardy as the other nations; from which circumſtance, joined to an equanimity of temper, the *Mundingoes* are frequently engaged as domeſtic Slaves. On eſtates, they ſoon reconcile themſelves to their ſituation, become ſettled, comfortable, and (if they pleaſe) happy.

" The character of the *Creole* may be conſidered as the general character of the Negro. He poſſeſſes the cruelty of the *Coromantee*, ſoftened by his intercourſe with the Whites; and the ſubtility and craftineſs of the *Eboe* are in him enhanced by a cunning which propenſity and conſtant practice render ſuperlative. Yet he poſſeſſes many of the negative virtues, and ſome of the poſitive degree, and happy is it for him in whom theſe qualities centre; for in this country, and in this ſtate, virtue may literally be ſaid to be its own reward.

" The *good Negro* (by which I mean every well-diſpoſed Slave, whether *Creole* or *African)* is protected and rewarded by his maſter, while he is beloved and reſpected by his fellow-labourers. In return, he is watchful over his maſter's property, warm towards his intereſt, and attached to his perſon. He cultivates his grounds regularly, and with care, becauſe he knows that *he* will reap the fruits of his labours. He rears his offſpring with the affection

of

of a parent; he teaches them betimes to be obedient and faithful, and he reconciles them gradually to labour with chearfulneſs for their maſter, becauſe he knows that they will reap the ſame advantages from *their* good conduct, that *he* does from his.

"The *bad Negro*, or rather the *bad Negroes*, (for there are thoſe who poſſeſs all degrees of vice, from the greateſt to the loweſt degree) are the moſt incorrigible beings of the human race. No human prudence, no management, no rewards, no puniſhments can turn the accurſed perverſity of their diſpoſitions. The hardened, determined, and early initiated felon, will continue his wicked and attrocious practices even to the laſt ſtage of life; and the ſlothful and unfeeling wretch, will purſue his crimes, and remain in a ſtate of apathy, even in the midſt of torments."

Such are the obſervations of a man, who from long experience, and repeated converſation with the different tribes under his charge, has been enabled to form character, and draw concluſions. It may, perhaps, be conſidered as preſumption in me to annex any thing of my own; but as I had attempted a general draught of the negro character, previous to my having received the above, I heſitate not to ſubjoin it, more eſpecially as I cannot help thinking that theſe ſtrictures warrant me to do ſo.

The negro is poſſeſſed of paſſions not only ſtrong, but

 ungovernable;

ungovernable; a mind dauntleſs, warlike, and unmerciful; a temper extremely irraſcible; a diſpoſition indolent, ſelfiſh, and deceitful; fond of joyous ſociality, riotous mirth, and extravagant ſhew. He has certain portions of kindneſs for his friends; generoſity and friendſhip for his favourites, and affections for his connections; but they are as ſparks which emit a glimmering light through the thick gloom that ſurrounds them, and which on every ebulition of anger or revenge, inſtantly diſappear. Furious in his love as in his hate; the negro is at beſt but a terrible huſband, a harſh father, and a precarious friend. A ſtrong and an unalterable affection for his countrymen and for his fellow paſſengers in particular, ſeems to be the moſt aimable paſſion in the negro breaſt; and it affords no ſmall pleaſure to the philoſophic mind, to perceive, amidſt the general rigidity and tenſion of the finer chords of nature, a ſtring which invariably yields the ſame tone on the ſmalleſt touch, and which continues to vibrate till death. As to all the other fine feelings of the ſoul, the negro, as far as I am able to perceive, is nearly deprived of them; and this I think is evident from the general treatment of the afflicted, the helpleſs and the unhappy of his own ſpecies, but more particularly from the barbarity and conſtant want of humanity ſhewn to all the brute creation.

It is folly in a maſter to expect a cordial and unalterable attachment from a negro; for paſſions, conſtitution and ſituation are unſurmountable barriers in the way.

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He has great art and may deceive you; but the incongruity of his ſentiments and his actions, will point out the deception. Load him with favours, you produce nothing like true gratitude; grant him over indulgence and you render him diſobedient, inſolent, and licentious; give him power, and you make him a tyrant.

Happy is it for the ſlaves in this country, that they are not governed by thoſe of their own colour, and ſubject to the puniſhments which they would inflict! A negro in the poſſeſſion of power, is ſo completely directed by his paſſions, that mercy or juſtice has little to do in his deciſions; and I have no heſitation in declaring, that amidſt all the plagues and miſeries annexed to ſlavery in this country, the negroes are the greateſt curſe to one another. With people of this deſcription, I leave you to judge how difficult the taſk is, to draw the line between ſeverity and over indulgence, and how ſafe it may be to throw the reigns of government entirely on their neck.

Such they certainly are, that without puniſhment, or the dread of it, a Negro will do nothing; with too much, you break his ſpirit, injure his health, and ruin your intereſt; with a moderate portion, and always applied with juſtice, you render him an uſeful and docile labourer, a tolerable ſervant and artiſt, and, as far as nature and habitudes will permit, a friend. By purſuing this plan, you muſt always promote your own intereſt and the happineſs of the ſlave, which, indeed, in all the parts of the iſland I have ſeen, is evidently conſpicuous.

I mean

I mean not, however, to aſſert, that in this iſland there are no examples of negroes being treated with impropriety, injuſtice, or inhumanity. This, indeed, would be a bold aſſertion, for in all communities, however well regulated, and among all national characters, however mild and compaſſionate, certain ſpirits will break out with violence againſt order and mercy, to diſturb occaſionally the bleſſings of ſociety. All I mean to advance is, that a general attention is now paid to the good treatment and comforts of the negro, in ſo much, that an *Owner* if diſtinguiſhed for cruelty and oppreſſion, is univerſally deſpiſed, and a *Manager*, in immediate danger of loſing his place, and his employ for ever. The love of power, and the poſſeſſion of it, are certainly dangerous things. In the hands of the experienced, the judicious, and the humane, dominion can never be deſtructive; it is but gunpowder pent up in the body of the cannon ready for exploſion; but to which, the priming and the match are never applied, but in the hour of neceſſity.

In the hands of the young, the ignorant, the inconſiderate, or the unmerciful however, power muſt always be attended with danger, and I am much afraid that in ſome of the inſtances immediately before us, dominion is too often productive of calamities.

A young man of eighteen or twenty, who, for four or five years, in the ſlaviſh office of book-keeper, has been eagerly panting for a ſtation which enables him to govern with abſolute ſway, has many paſſions to moderate, and many

many fond deſires to overcome, before he can fill a throne, round which juſtice and mercy ſhould be diſpenſed. Should this young man be only thoughtleſs or inattentive he muſt be defective in diſtributive juſtice; ſhould he be paſſionate, he muſt be often oppreſſive; but ſhould he be governed by a wanton deſire to exert authority at the expence of judgment; ſhould he have a heart inſenſible to the calamities, wants and difficulties of thoſe immediately under his care; or ſhould he be obdurate, cruel and unmerciful in his puniſhments, what a dreadful tribunal muſt be erected for the deſtruction of the unhappy!

The late laws which I before obſerved, have juſt paſſed the houſe of aſſembly in this iſland, are certainly well framed for the protection of the negro, provided that theſe laws could always be carried timeouſly into execution. But whatever excellence they may poſſeſs to puniſh and reſtrain cruelty, or whatever general opprobrium may be attendant on oppreſſion to ſlaves, ſtill before theſe laws can be put in force, or before the culprit can be diſmiſſed with diſgrace from his employ, may not much and ſerious miſchief be committed? I am, therefore, of opinion, that ſomething more effectual ſhould be introduced, to curb the wantonneſs of power and to prevent the hand of cruelty from being extended.

I ſhall now ſay a few words relative to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, with which I ſhall conclude the ſubject.

Before we proceed to advance any thing on this head, and in my opinion before any determination on a matter

of

of ſuch importance ſhould be attemped at home, the following conſiderations ought to be well attended to.

1ſt. What advantage or loſs would GREAT BRITAIN experience from a total Abolition of the Slave Trade?

2d. What advantage or loſs would AFRICA reap or ſuffer from it?

3d. What was the ſtate of morality and civil government of the ſeveral AFRICAN tribes, previous to the Slave Trade, and what influence has that trade had on their manners and government?

4th. What is the preſent ſtate of the Negro in Africa, before he is purchaſed; and what change does he undergo in his character, on his being ſold in the WEST INDIES?

5th. What reaſon can be aſſigned for the very great decreaſe of Slaves in the WEST INDIES?

6th. Is it practicable to make ſuch alterations in the condition of the Negroes in the WEST INDIES at preſent, as to cauſe them to multiply, ſo as to preclude the neceſſity of further importations from AFRICA?

7th. Would the cultivation of the WEST INDIES be promoted or retarded by the Abolition of Slavery?

8th. Can the WEST INDIES be cultivated without the aſſiſtance of Negroes?

The

The firſt four of theſe eight queries are beyond my ſolution: I ſhall therefore leave them to wiſer heads at home, and content myſelf with anſwering the four following, as far as information and obſervation enable me.

The cauſes of the great decreaſe of Slaves in this country, ſay the gentlemen of the faculty (who unqueſtionably are the moſt competent to judge) are the following:

1ſt. A long and a crouded confinement in the paſſage from AFRICA, which, from the nature of the ſituation, muſt always injure health, and generate diſeaſes, which accompany them to this country.

2d. A want of *ſufficient* attention to cloathing, habitation, and proper food, on their arrival.---And,

Laſtly, The neglect of proportioning labour to ſtrength.

" A Creole, or a ſeaſoned Negro," ſay they, " has certainly as much attention paid to his welfare as he requires; for, comparatively ſpeaking, he requires little. He is free from dangerous and latent diſeaſe; he is accuſtomed to the climate, and acquainted with the advantages and inconveniencies of his ſituation; he is in poſſeſſion of a comfortable habitation, plenty of proviſions of his own culture, and plenty of ſtock of his own raiſing; and, as he has wherewithal to procure comforts, and experience to avoid evils; he is at all times (except during temporary indiſpoſition) fully enabled to execute any taſk he has to perform, with eaſe to himſelf, and ſatisfaction to his ſuperior.

"But this ſtate of matters," continue they, "is very different from that of the new Negro juſt imported from a climate much warmer than the WEST INDIES, and from the unwholeſome hold of a ſhip, ſtill warmer than either. This Negro, loaded, perhaps, with a variety of diſorders, from a confinement amidſt phlogiſticated and putrid air, enhaled almoſt conſtantly for ſeveral weeks together, his fluids corrupted, and his ſtrength greatly exhauſted, ought not ſurely to experience the ſame treatment, on his arrival, as the other; nor be ſubjected to execute taſks which, though common, are, nevertheleſs, greatly too much for his exertions.

"Inſtead of the uſual food and cloathing," ſay they, "this Negro ſhould be fed, for a conſiderable time, with ſucculent viands and plenty of vegetables; be cloathed in warm woollens; put into ſome warm temporary habitation, 'till his own is built; and, for at leaſt a twelvemonth after his arrival, ought to be carefully attended to, with regard to his health, his conveniencies, and his food, which laſt ſhould be given with a liberal hand. His labour, for ſome time, ſhould be eaſy, and rather under than equal to his powers; nor ſhould this labour commence 'till he has been ſome weeks in the country."

With additional attention, ſuch as theſe, there is no doubt that the decreaſe of Negroes by *deaths* would be leſs; but, from the various and dreadful diſorders incident to the AFRICAN;§ his inattention, or rather his averſion, to

§ Some of theſe diſorders are not only dreadful, but often incurable. Theſe

to cleanlineſs; his often neglecting, and even concealing, complaints; and the impoſſibility of examining minutely and regularly into the ſtate of every individual, amidſt ſuch a variety of important concerns, many muſt annually periſh, independent of other caſualties, which we ſhall hereafter mention.

As to the ſixth queſtion, there certainly is no denying the fact, that Negroes, with proper attention, will multiply conſiderably, for upon many of the old eſtates in this iſland, which have not experienced revolutions from *debts* or *change of property*, there are ten, nay ſometimes twenty natives for one African; but that the ſupply from propagation alone, in any circumſtances, ſhould preclude the neceſſity of importing new ſlaves, is an idea, which, pleaſing as it may appear, cannot, I am afraid, be admitted.

Were Weſt-India property *limited*, *completely cultivated*, and *all plentifully ſupplied with Slaves*, matters might indeed go on very well, and Africa forge her future chains in

 vain.

Theſe are the *Yaws*, the *Mal d' eſtomac*, or the diſeaſe of eating dirt; the *Bone-ache*, and the *Cocaby*. There is likewiſe a diſeaſe incident to infancy in this country, which may be conſidered as a curious fact, and which muſt tend greatly to depopulation. More than one-fifth of the black children, born in this iſland, die of the lock-jaw, within the *ninth* day; after which the danger is over. This is a fact, ſupported by the teſtimony of all thoſe with whom I have converſed on the ſubject. The medical gentlemen confeſs their ignorance of the cauſe of the diſeaſe, although it occurs much ſeldomer when the woman is delivered by an experienced *accoucheur*, and the infant carefully attended by a ſenſible nurſe during the nine days,—I believe the diſeaſe is called *Triſmus Infantium*.

But we muſt conſider that in this part of the globe, and more particularly in this iſland, old ſettlements are conſtantly *changing* and *extending*, and *new ſettlements daily* ſpringing up.

At this time, there is not near one third part of the iſland in cultivation. The other two thirds (I ſpeak of land fit for culture) is in a ſtate of nature, and ſo completely covered with woods, as to require no ſmall labour, and conſiderable time, before a property can be cleared and rendered productive; all of which depend entirely on the number or ſtrength of Negroes you put upon it.

Now, where is a perſon, poſſeſſed of credit or money, and deſirous to eſtabliſh a new ſettlement, or to extend an old one, to procure Negroes neceſſary for the undertaking? *Encreaſed population* you'll ſay can ſupply him.---Take the following facts.

More than one third, perhaps one half of the eſtates in this iſland, are not, at this moment, ſupplied with two thirds of the ſlaves neceſſary to cultivate the property to the *full extent*; and in ſeveral pariſhes, ſuch is the deficiency of negroes, that eſtates which formerly yielded 300 hogſheads of ſugar, can now hardly produce 100. But whence, and how this ſcarcity you'll ſay? There are many cauſes;---epidemical diſeaſe---misfortunes---debt---change of property---but more particularly hurricane.---Theſe, you'll obſerve, are *calamities*, not cauſes.

Misfortunes, *debts*, and *change of property*, may indeed ruin

ruin the Proprietor; but do they annihilate the Slave? No, not inſtantly; but they diminiſh ſtrength---check exertion---cramp ſyſtem---enfeeble operation---and finally ruin property, and deſtroy the Slave.

I ſhall explain myſelf. From inevitable misfortunes, or from any other cauſe, the proprietor of an eſtate drops a little behind hand, and owes ſums which he finds it impoſſible to pay off in time to ſatisfy an importunate creditor. An action is brought, judgment obtained, and the Provoſt Marſhal levies on 30, 40, or 50 Slaves, for the payment of the debt; which Slaves, perhaps, are diſpoſed of to eight or ten different people, and at one half of their value. Deprived of theſe forty or fifty Negroes, the wheels that formerly moved with eaſe and rapidity, become inſtantly clogged. The proprietor finds all his flattering improvement and advancements precluded; and, what is ſtill worſe, he perceives his uſual emoluments retarded and curtailed. To preſerve his ſtation he redoubles his exertions, and this neceſſarily obliges him to exact additional exertions from his remaining Slaves. Now ruin commences. A new arrangement takes place---They are put to *two* ſpells inſtead of *three*---they work twelve hours in the twenty-four---their food is inadequate to their labour---they become meagre---loſe ſtrength---turn ſickly and drop off daily! During all this dreary and deſtructive ſcene (which may laſt for ſeveral years) misfortunes are conſtantly multiplying.

A de-

A diminution of produce, muſt always keep pace with a diminution of ſtrength.---Debts accumulate---credit fails---new levies are made, and after ſtruggling long and and ineffectually againſt this increaſing ſtream of deſolation, he is at length ſwept down the torrent, and his property ſold for the benefit of his creditors. Even admitting that this man ſhould keep poſſeſſion of all his Negroes; that courts, and judgments and provoſt marſhals have nothing to do with his property; and that to avoid the expences of ſuit, he, (like many in this iſland) diſpoſe of his *ſtock* to diſcharge his debts, ſtill he deſtroys the nerves and ſinews of his operations, and muſt in the end experience a ſimilar cataſtrophe.

Without ſtock on a ſugar eſtate, a proprietor can do nothing. He can neither bring his canes to his mill nor carry his produce to market; but independent of theſe inconveniences, on all eſtates which are not ſupplied with water, ſtock is the only power that ſets the different machinery in motion. So conſcious are people in this country of the great importance and value of ſtock, that the inſtant a proprietor begins to diſpoſe of this eſſential article, he becomes ſuſpected, and his credit with merchants fails. Now, without credit, where can he procure cloathing and proviſions for his Negroes, and without theſe what becomes of *them?*---I need not tire you by a repetition of deſcriptions all tending to the ſame point, and all injuries to the life of the Slave *.

As

* This picture muſt not be conſidered as a repreſentation of what occurs often in this iſland. It, however, may ſerve to convince thoſe who

As to *hurricanes*, the conſequences are not only dreadful, but incredible. The pariſh where I now write theſe ſtrictures (Weſtmoreland) is but juſt beginning to revive from the calamities of the year 1780, a repetition of which would, at this moment, effectually ruin every individual in it beyond the poſſibility of redemption. An European can form no juſt idea of a Weſt India hurricane, far leſs of the direful effects which accompany it. It is not the deſtruction of whole diſtricts---the complete loſs of produce ---the ruin of ſtock, and the demolition of all kinds of works and buildings on each eſtate, that we are principally to conſider. No! theſe though dreadful, are ſmall compared with other evils, which, while they muſt bring down inevitable ruin on the ſufferers, muſt wring the hearts of the compaſſionate and the humane.---It is the total deſtruction of thoſe proviſions, which conſtitute the ſupport and exiſtence of your Negroes---it is the inability, and impoſſibility of procuring other proviſions in time to keep them alive---it is your ſick without an hoſpital---your infirm without ſhelter; and it is the miſery of beholding hundreds of wretched beings waſting around you, clamouring for food, and imploring that aſſiſtance which you cannot beſtow!---Theſe are ſcenes to awaken ſenſibility, and to make the moraliſt exclaim with indignation, *Curſed be your iſles, and curſed your inſtitutions!*---So, in the warmth of the moment, I might ſay; but let not calamities

who perhaps are hurried away by a favourite ſyſtem, of the great importance of poſſeſſing a *ſufficient* number of hands to execute neceſſary labour on Weſt India property, and of the danger annexed to every plan which may occaſion a *deficiency*.

ties be conſtrued into cruelty, nor inevitable deſtruction be confounded with neglect. Throw up your WEST INDIA poſſeſſions, and aboliſh your AFRICAN commerce in God's name! But throw not the decreaſe of the helpleſs WEST INDIA bondman on the inhumanity of his maſter alone. Let other cauſes be adduced and admitted; and if you are determined, at all events, that the MIDIANITES ſhall be ſmote ſorely, let it be with the "*ſword of the Lord and of Gideon.*"

But excluſive of the inſtances which have already been produced, there are other cauſes which in my opinion ſtrike particularly againſt Negro population in this country. Were *one third* of the Slaves who are fit for propagation, to be regularly joined in wedlock, and were they to conform even tolerably to its inſtitutions, the number of Negroes in this iſland would be conſiderably increaſed. But the Negro, and particularly the Negreſs are by no means calculated for this ſtate. The infidelity of the ladies, and the irregularity of the men are ſuch, as muſt always raiſe a powerful barrier againſt prolification; the truth of which I believe is exemplified on every eſtate in the WEST INDIES.

It may be aſked here, how comes population among Slaves in the WEST INDIES, to differ ſo materially from that among men of the ſame deſcription in AMERICA? The queſtion is pertinent, but, in my opinion, not unanſwerable.

The

The AFRICAN, on his arrival in AMERICA, is immediately preſented with examples for his conduct, which muſt always ſtrike, and which muſt likewiſe be highly favourable to population. He is introduced among a numerous body of his ſuperiors, regular in their conduct; exemplary in their lives, and particularly diſpoſed to diſcountenance and puniſh every diſorderly and improper intercourſe among the ſexes. He perceives an unvaried ſyſtem eſtabliſhed for the encouragement of decorum; he obſerves regulations and laws inſtituted for the particular purpoſe of chaſtity; and he is made to know and feel, that ſhould he fail to conform to eſtabliſhed cuſtoms, it will be *his* fate to experience puniſhment.---What picture or what example is preſented to the ſame perſon, on his arrival, and during his ſtay in the WEST INDIA iſlands? Why, he is put on an eſtate, where he finds 300 of his own colour, and not above four or five whites. He perceives no attention paid to either chaſtity, delicacy or decorum among the ſexes. He may take to his arms as many wives as there are fair ones who will admit of his addreſſes; but what is ſtill worſe, he perceives his ſuperior, and almoſt every deſcription of white men, totally inattentive to what ſo materially tends to propagation, namely, an attachment to one woman. Can it therefore be ſuppoſed that the conduct of the Negro in both countries will be the ſame; and can it be expected that ſimilar effects are to be produced from contrary cauſes?

The commerce between the whites and the blacks has been, and muſt be, productive of infinite diſadvantage to

Negro population. A black woman, inſtead of a Negro child, produces a Mulatto; which, again, inſtead of turning out a valuable ſlave, is generally emancipated by the father, and becomes often a vagabond, if a male, and always a lady of concubinage, if a female. This elegant croſs-breed ſeldom are productive with each other; ſo that if they are to propagate effectually, it muſt be with a black man or a black woman, which production is called a *Sambo*. But as the brown lady conſiders it as a ſtep *derrogér a nobleſſe*, to deſcend to any thing darker than her own complexion, ſhe either turns a wiſtful eye to a *Boccra Keeper*, or contents herſelf with a gentleman of her own colour. By thoſe practices, a hoſt of Mulattoes, Muſtees, Guadroons and Mawkiſh Whites, ſwarm in every town, and every corner, to the great detriment of Negro population, and the general diſadvantage of the community; for, independent of theſe free women being the drones of ſociety, they occaſion an additional conſumption of Negroes, whoſe ſervices might be applied to much more important purpoſes. Each lady, for inſtance, on being admitted to ſhare the bed of her lord, generally receives a New Negro Slave, as a *Bridal Gift*, which is often doubled, or trebled, according to the fondneſs and folly of her lover. Upon this fair one's becoming the mother of a ſtill fairer race, additional ſervants muſt be procured for little *Maſter* and *Miſs*, who, in their turn, often receive ſimilar donations; ſo that in the courſe of fifteen or twenty years, a brown lady may be in poſſeſſion of twenty or thirty negroes. Theſe negroes, from their maintenance being expenſive in town, are moſtly

hired

hired out to the beſt advantage,---the males, as tradeſmen or waiting ſervants,---the females, as waſherwomen or hawkers of merchandize, proviſions and fruits, about the ſtreets; and no ſet of beings are more worthleſs or more unhappy.

A free Mulatto woman (who, without exception, may be ſaid to be cruel and tyrannical to her negroes) gives herſelf no concern about the means by which a female ſlave procures money, provided ſhe brings her ſo much per month; which, if ſhe fails to do, ſhe is immediately flogged ſeverely; ſo that theſe poor wretches are often reduced to ſhifts, which proſtitution cannot relieve, and conſequently often ſteal to avoid puniſhment.

On the other hand, the free Mulatto man (who, if he is well diſpoſed, is generally a tradeſman) muſt have negroes, not only to attend himſelf, but to aſſiſt in carrying on his buſineſs. But all theſe trades employ none but *males*, which circumſtance is likewiſe againſt population. Why ſo? you'll ſay; Cannot they procure wives?---Yes, but theſe belong not to the owner of the males, and what is ſtill worſe, thoſe ladies have too many huſbands already.

Taking, therefore, a clear and unprejudiced view of the ſeveral circumſtances that demand *additional ſtrength to aſſiſt additional exertions*---the various events and caſualties that tend to *impair and deſtroy human life*, and the different cauſes that retard and prevent a *general propagation* among the ſpecies, I am afraid we muſt give up all

plans of ſupplying theſe iſlands with ſlaves by increaſed population alone, as viſionary and impracticable *.

There only remains now, an anſwer to the ſeventh and eighth queries; the laſt of which, I ſhould preſume, requires no anſwer at all. The conſtitution of the Negro, and

* After having thus enumerated, with ſome minuteneſs, the various cauſes which unqueſtionably tend greatly to retard Negro population in this country; I muſt indulge myſelf in a more pleaſing taſk, namely, that of pointing out what I conceive may be productive of ſuch an increaſe as to leſſen the neceſſity of preſent annual importations from Africa. The treatment of Slaves in theſe iſlands has certainly, within theſe laſt twenty years, undergone a wonderful change for the better; but it is ſtill far from being complete. There is no ſenſible and ingenuous man, with whom I have hitherto converſed on the ſubject, who denies that the Negroes in this iſland are in *general* over-worked and under-fed, even on the mildeſt and beſt regulated properties. There is no man likewiſe, who will ſeriouſly ſay, that Negro population has yet become an object of ſufficient magnitude, or that the beſt means have been adopted to produce it.—One of the greateſt barriers to the propagation of Slaves is, the common practice of purchaſing a greater number of males than females, on account of the ſuperior ſtrength and labour of the men, and their being much leſs liable to diſeaſe and confinement. Were this practice over-ruled; were the males and the females more equally paired; were a ſyſtem of decorum eſtabliſhed among the Whites; and were a rigid attention paid to every thing favourable to the health, comforts and propagation of the ſpecies, I have little doubt that in a certain number of years Population would be very different indeed to what it has hitherto been.—Would to Heaven I could ſay with *confidence*, that this population would be productive of the wiſhed for effect!—but I muſt not allow my feelings to carry me too far, nor to ſport an Utopian ſyſtem, when ſo much ſerious and mature conſideration is neceſſary to determine. I have, however, furniſhed the *Pros* and the *Cons*;—it reſts with thoſe who point at reformation and change, to digeſt and *decide* accordingly.

and the nature of labour in this climate are ſuch, that they are inſeparable; nor can there be a doubt, that on the exiſtence, or diſmiſſion, of the AFRICAN, the WEST INDIES muſt ſtand or fall.

The other query comes under the article *Freedom*, and has already, I flatter myſelf, been ſufficiently anſwered.---That the bondage of the Negro, in the eye of reaſon, philoſophy, and humanity, is unconſtitutional and unjuſt, I ſhall admit. That ſome means may be deviſed to break his fetters, and reſtore happineſs to ſo large a portion of the human race, is my moſt ardent wiſh; for Slavery, decked with all her trappings, is at beſt but a "*ſorry ſight.*" It is, however, no ſmall diminution of our pain, to perceive dance and ſong go hand in hand with labour; and proſperity and content, though diſgraced in fetters, ſpring up apparently free.

To attempt a great or ſudden change, would, I think, be a bold, and, perhaps, a dangerous expedient; for, I am much afraid, matters have proceeded too far, and habits continued too long, to admit of a radical cure. That the preſent comforts of the Negro may be ſtill encreaſed, I have no doubt of; but, if we mean to render him *happy* in this country, we muſt not attempt to make him FREE *.

* Part of theſe notes were ſubjoined in conſequence of ſome late publications on the Slave Trade having fallen into my hands ſince writing the preſent Eſſay. I have carefully avoided all controverſy on this occaſion, well knowing, from the ferment which ſeems to pervade all ranks and deſcriptions at home, that there is little occaſion for additional

ditional fuel to encreaſe the flame. I ſhall now only remark (and I hope I need not add, that I do it with ſincerity) that in all the publications I have ſeen on this ſubject, (the *Curſory Remarks* excepted) there is hardly one obſervation that applies to the preſent ſtate of Slavery in *this iſland;* and it appears to me, that the pictures of Weſt India barbarity and oppreſſion ſeem to be all drawn from a retroſpect of what prevailed twenty or thirty years ago. I muſt likewiſe obſerve, in juſtice to a writer, whom I cannot help thinking is poſſeſſed of much good ſenſe, candour and information, that (in the publication above excepted) I have hardly found a ſingle remark relative to the treatment of Weſt India Slaves, which does not accord perfectly with every thing I have been able to obſerve and collect in this country.—Had this judicious and well-written pamphlet come to my hands ſooner, it would have prevented the inſertion of ſeveral circumſtances which I have taken ſome pains to deſcribe in the preſent Eſſay.—It may not, however, be unpleaſant to thoſe who really wiſh to come at Truth, to obſerve a coincidence of opinions and repreſentations in two men who write at the diſtance of 3000 miles from each other.

That theſe obſervations (were they to come before the public to-morrow) would produce a change in the ſentiments of a humane nation, I have not the moſt diſtant expectation. The minds of thoſe who reject every thing but what tends evidently to ſupport a favourite cauſe, muſt be allowed to ſubſide a little, before cool and diſpaſſionate reflection takes place.—I have, however, endeavoured to contribute my mite towards diſpelling a miſt which ſeems to encreaſe daily; and as I have impartially, and I hope diſpaſſionately, collected the ſentiments of men on both ſides of the queſtion, I flatter myſelf, at leaſt, that you will do me the juſtice to believe that in this inveſtigation of facts I have not been prejudiced in favour of either.

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